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SUBJECT: TURKEY: AMBASSADOR WILSON VISITS GAZIANTEP AND ADANA IN SE

1. (SBU) During a March 5-8 trip to Gaziantep and Adana, Ambassador Wilson met with local government leaders, business groups, academics, journalists, civic leaders, as well as U.S. Air Force personnel at Incirlik Air Base. He also participated in numerous outreach activities, including a visit to Gaziantep's Zeugma Museum, where he met with students from the SANKO School, and to the Gaziantep American Hospital, where he announced a USAID ASHA program grant to the hospital. In Adana, AMB Wilson had opportunities to explain U.S. policy at a press availability with reporters, as well as during a taped interview for Cukurova TV and in a speech before the Adana branch of the Foreign Economic Relations Council (DEIK in Turkish). The AMB also toured Adana's Sabanci Central Mosque and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline Terminal in Ceyhan.

2. (SBU) Chairman of the American Business Forum in Turkey Halim Neyzi, and Vice Chairman of the Turkish-American Business Association Erdal Kamisli traveled with the Ambassador and accompanied him to his meetings with government and business leaders. Regional business leaders all expressed an interest in broadening trade with the U.S., sought U.S. investment in the region and hoped that U.S.-Turkish joint efforts could capitalize on Iraq and other regional business opportunities. The Gaziantep Chamber of Industry sought U.S. participation in a major June trade fair focused on Iraq as well. Gaziantep business leaders also called for the U.S. to grant Turkey a qualified industrial zone (QIZ) which at least would include textiles if not other commodities.

3. (SBU) During dinner conversation at the Adana Principal Officer's residence, local business, academic and media intellectuals told the AMB about their concerns regarding the economic and social impact of (mostly Kurdish) migration into Adana from other parts of Turkey. This topic came up in many of the AMB's conversations during his trip, but most prominently in Adana. The dinner intellectuals were further concerned about the current state of affairs in Iran and Iraq, and about the impact of U.S. policy on this part of Turkey. The intellectuals also expressed concern about the image problem the United States has among Turks, and the growing mistrust which they perceive between Americans and Muslim people around the world.

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